

ZYGOTE

Zygote plummets the depths in hot pursuit of a highly feared yet simple creature with a killer reputation. In completely unrelated news, Dubya fails to learn how to use his iPod

SHARK AND AWE

The US Department of Defense is interested in mind control, which is why they have been sticking computer chips into rat brains for years. Although brother rat is a tenacious little creature, he's a bit on the small side for battling against heavy armour. So the mind-control boffins have now moved on to sharks.

Citizen shark is determined, strong and extremely stealthy, making him the ideal underwater spy. With added mind control, the Department of Defense is hoping to turn him into an anti-submarine seeker and destroyer. Experiments have been successful so far.

Instead of aimlessly trawling the seas looking for something they can eat, the beasts are being 'steered' by a computer that sends signals to an antenna wired to a chip in their cold, calculating brains. The boffins believe they can get feedback on all the tell-tale chemical traces and electromagnetic fields these creatures can sense. Zygote seems to remember the boffins pulling the same stunt in Vietnam, only then the chemical traces were heroin and the mind-control device was called Anne Margaret.

LURE AND ORDER

Suppose for a moment that today is Valentine's Day. You are walking

through the City of London on your way to the high-tech office where you work, when a complete stranger strolls up and hands you a syringe labelled, "Stick this needle in your arm. Warning: may contain a virus." Would you thank that stranger, take the syringe and shoot the contents into your bloodstream? No? That's exactly what the majority of recipients did in an experiment carried out by IT specialists The Training Camp, except they were handed CD-ROMs, clearly labelled with a stark warning about the inherent riskiness of downloading software that has not been checked.

Six out of 10 suckers went straight to their office computers and fired up the unknown software, believing they had the chance to win a fictitious prize if they did so. Luckily, the lure CDs contained only a routine that logged how many fools tried to install the spoof program and did not carry a real virus. But the potential for damage of such a blatant breach of data security was huge, especially because the dupes included both insurance and bank employees.

The Data Protection Act requires that appropriate measures are taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of data in the workplace, and against accidental loss or damage. What it does not ensure is that idiots who have

unprotected intercourse with street software and then spread their pox over a network get their goolies cut off. Zygote recommends the act is updated accordingly.

IN POD WE TRUST

In the past, you could judge someone's eligibility to reign by the way they organised their hard disk. These days it's more likely to be by the way they handle their iPod. Tony Blair has confessed he cannot use one, whereas Gordon Brown boasts he enjoys "everything from Bach to Beethoven" on his. The Queen is impressed by "how small and handy" her 6GB silver iPod Mini is, and no doubt she has downloaded Prince Edward's Shirley Bassey collection to enjoy when she's out shooting corgis.

Which brings us to George W Bush who, like our own dear Prime Minister, is unable to operate his iPod, bought for him by his felonious twin daughters. A presidential aide named Blake Gottesman has been dubbed Chief Pilot: iPod-One and tasked with assembling a suitable playlist for the President. No doubt he also helps guide the earphones into Dubya's left audio-sensory orifice without it going all the way through the cranial cavity and falling out of the right audio-sensory orifice.

Pope Benedict was given an engraved iPod after occupying the Vatican and admits to downloading audio dramas about the lives of the saints. But even His Holiness is a mere mortal. Zygote has been trying to work out what Jesus would have on his iPod. Due to the new protocols that forbid publications printing anything that takes the piss out of The Almighty, Zygote must restrict these comments to the belief that Jesus would fill his iPod with anything and everything by The Carpenters.

NONCE SENSE

In a landmark ruling, Judge Alistair MacDuff QC has ordered Tracy Williams to pay £10,000 damages plus costs to MikeUK-PO53EX, for calling him a "racist bigot", a "maggot" and a "nonce", in an internet chatroom. The discussion group, hosted by Yahoo!, was frequented by a few dozen members, but Judge MacDuff considered the words were "available to everyone in the whole world [who has] access to a computer and knows how to go on the internet".

Zygote thinks the judge has applied 19th-century libel law to a 21st-century forum for opinion and discussion, and his ruling is a potential disaster. Almost every internet forum, blog and message board contains its share of abuse, and "the whole world" treats these contributions with the gravitas they deserve: absolutely none. They are the equivalent of saloon bar banter, which may be boorish and offensive, and may even lead to someone getting barred from the pub, but they have no business as the subject of a libel action. Slagging off people you disagree with online is what the internet is for. This verdict sets a dangerous precedent for curbing the freedom to cock a snook at your peers. **CS**

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221:USB COMMUNICATIONS



In 1996, some far-sighted computer manufacturers developed a new standard to replace serial and parallel ports



Today, the USB system has evolved into the most popular device in the world for successful communications



Not to be confused with the USA system.